

First book printed at Malton

MODEST AND CANDID
REFLECTIONS

ON
DR. M I D D L E T O N ' S

Examination

OF THE RIGHT REVEREND
The LORD BISHOP of LONDON'S
USE AND INTENT OF

PROPHECY:

In a LETTER to the Honourable
G. L Y T T E L T O N, Esq;
From THOMAS COMBER, A. B.

— He leading swiftly rewl'd
In Tangles, and made intricate seem strait,
To Mischief swift. Hope elevates and Joy
Brightens his Cross; as when a wandering
Fire, &c.

Parad. Lost, ix. v. 631.

OYTOC EKEINOC!

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Author of these Reflections presuming that the Lord Bishop of London's great Employments wou'd not allow him to Answer Dr. Middleton's Examination, and that the Dr's great Name might prejudice Truth, esteemed it his Duty to commit these Papers speedily to the Press. And tho' Want of Time is no Appology for the deficiency of a printed Performance, yet if any small Mistake as in Reference to Pages or ought of this Kind appear, the candid Reader will easily excuse it when he knows that the Reflector only received Dr. M's Book on Feb. 1st, and was obliged to part with it the Day of the Date of these Reflections at the End of the Letter, so that he could not examine his References---All that he wishes for from these modest and candid Reflections, on Dr. M's part, is that he may do the great Prelate concerned, that Justice which he has not hitherto found from the Examiner.

BY Reason of the Author's Absence, the following material Errors are committed. p. 18. l. 10. for it his read it. His --- p. 25. l. 5. after And r. adds --- l. 10 and 11 transpose the Points after Glory and allow --- p. 26. l. 12. f. Table r. Fable --- l. 12. f. Ambiquity r. Ambiguity --- p. 27. l. 7. f. Seducees r. Seducers --- p. 28. l. 5. f. to r. by --- l. 23. f. Jews r. Jesus --- p. 31. l. 13. f. more r. most --- p. 41. f. Turn and r. Turn, and a --- p. 45. l. 15. f. wou'd r. cou'd--- p. 50. l. 20. before DOCTRINE insert THE --- p. 51. at End of Paragraph add ? --- p. 55. l. 6. before Meaning insert true.

MODEST AND CANDID REFLECTIONS

ON

DR MIDDLETON's Examination
of the Right Reverend the
LORD BISHOP of LONDON's
USE AND INTENT OF PROPHECY:

In a Letter to the Honourable
G. LYTTELTON Esq; &c.

Sir,

THE Zeal which you have shewn
in Defence of Revelation, the *Ci-
vilities* nay *Honors* which you have done,
me, and my Desire to preserve the Spi-
rit of *Candor* and *Modesty* in this Piece
by addressing it to a Person eminent for
those Qualities, determine me adorn it
with your Name.

The Lord Bishop of London has judiciously observed : “ *They who consider the Prophecies under the Old Testament as so many Predictions only, independent on each other, can never form a right Judgment of the Argument for the Truth of Christianity drawn from this Topic, nor be able to satisfy themselves when they are confronted with the Objections of Unbelievers. It is an easy Matter for Men of Leisure and tolerable Parts to find Difficulties in particular Predictions, and in the Applications of them made by Writers who lived many Hundred Years ago.*” He mentions the Means these Writers had of reconciling the Prediction and Event, as Records, &c. now lost, and proceeds. “ *But not so easy to shew that a Chain of Prophecies reaching thro’ several Thousand Years, delivered at different Times, yet manifestly subservient to one and the same End, is the Effect of Art and Contrivance.* (a) Dr.

(a) Preface to the three first Editions of *the Use and Intent of Prophecy*. NB. The Dr. observing this omitt-

Dr. Middleton misrepresents the Passage as follows. "*According to the Assertion of this Eminent Prelate, the Argument drawn from Prophecies considered singly and independently — can neither satisfy any body, nor bear to be confronted with the Objections of Unbelievers.*" (b)

The Bishop only says, They who consider the Prophecies as independent, cannot satisfy themselves *when* confronted with Unbelievers; that is, they cannot for want of Records, &c. give such Answers to *Difficulties* raised by Infidels, as can satisfy *themselves* if reasonable Men, that they are sufficient to convince Unbelievers, tho' *themselves* are satisfied that

ed in the twolast Editions, says, "Many [Readers] will be apt to think that the Passage which I have cited from it, carries in it so direct a Condemnation of the Evangelists Application of Prophecies, that it was omitted for that very Reason, as tending to raise Scruples in People's Minds to the Disadvantage of his Lordship's Scheme." N. 1. p. 7. of Exam. But I shall soon shew that his Lordship's Scheme effectually confirms the Application of the Evangelists.

(b). p. 21 of Exam.

that these Difficulties are no *solid* Objections to the Application of such Prophecies, because they are satisfied of the divine Authority of the Persons applying them.

The Dr. therefore should in justice retract these Censures of his Lordship, *viz.* “*He plainly gives up those Testimonies [of the Evangelists applying Prophecies] as incapable of being justified.*” (c) Again, “*This Difficulty [of reconciling the Prediction and Event] induced him to quit that Field to the Adversary.*” (d) For so far is his Lordship from *quitting* it, that he shews a Way of *defending* it, which is the *only one* effectual when Prophecies *alone* are considered, and the Reality of the Miracles wrought by the Evangelists is not *supposed* or *proved*. For his Lordship first observes that the Difficulties of reconciling Predictions and
Events

(c) p. 22. (d) p. 151, 152. In like Manner the Dr. accuses the Bishop of *deserting the Foundation* laid by the *Evangelists*. p. 24.

Events as laid together by the Evangelists, can afford no *solid* Objection against their Applications, because such Difficulties may arise only from the Loss of Records, &c. Then in order to give us a clear View of the Force of the Argument for the Truth of our holy Faith as deduced from Prophecy in the Old Testament, he observes that (the Truth of the Miracles of Moses and the Prophets being *inferred* from the Establishment of the Jewish Law and the Reverence paid by that People to the Prophets.) there *plainly* appears a *Chain* of Prophecies *all* tending to and ending in *one* Messiah: some of which are plainly verified in our Lord, and in no Person who ever lived but him. And at the same Time the Prophecies of the Old Testament declare that the Messiah must come *before* that Period of Time when our Lord had been born one (*e*) hundred Years. Consequently the other
Prophecies

(*e*) The Jewish Temple, during the Continuance of which Messiah was to come, was destroyed A.D. 70.

Prophecies which are obscure, *must* be fulfilled in him; that is, He must be the Messiah. But if so, his *immediate* and *chosen* Followers, to whom he gave the Spirit of Truth, cou'd not deceive Mankind by misapplying Prophecies. This is the Argument, and indeed a *convincing* one.

The Examiner beats the Air thro' many (f) Pages, when he *solemnly* applies himself to prove that Christ and his Evangelists applied Prophecies independently as so many *distinct Proofs* of Christ's divine Mission. The Truth of the Case is plainly this. The Miracles of Christ and his Evangelists, together with the Goodness of his Life and Purity of his Doctrine were sufficient to convince any reasonable Person who knew *nothing* about the Prophecies of the Old Testament, that he was what he called himself, *the Saviour of Mankind*: And thus were the Heathen World *chiefly* converted

(f) From 8 to 21.

ed. But to the Jews he was to prove himself the *Messiah*. However great therefore his Miracles were, however benevolent the Actions of his Life appeared however pure his Doctrine; yet if he cou'd not convince an *impartial* Jew that he answered the Description of the Messiah given by the Prophets, he cou'd not reasonably expect to be received by him. But as it was impossible on every Opportunity of public or private Converse with the Jews, for our Lord or his Evangelists to apply *all* the Chain of Prophecies in the Old Testament to him; they took occasion from *particular* Incidents chiefly to apply *particular* Predictions; as when in reading the Law they fell upon particular Predictions, but *more especially* when the Performance of a Miracle gave an *affecting* Proof of the Correspondency of the Event and Prophecy. And when Prophecies were thus happily applied, and no particular Prediction *reasonably* ascribed to to the Messiah, appeared inconsistent with Christ's Person, &c. the
Jews

Jews had a sufficient Proof. But if *any one plain* Prophecy of the Messiah, as for Instance, that he shou'd cure the Blind, had been inconsistent with Christ's Character, that is, if he *cou'd not* have cured the Blind, all his other Miracles, even his raising the Dead, the Goodness of his Life, the Purity of his Doctrine, the apparent Correspondency between his Circumstances and the other Prophecies, cou'd not amount to a sufficient Proof of his Messiahship. The Dr's Supposition then Sir, that our Lord and his Evangelists applied Prophecies as *singly decisive*, is a Mistake. Our Lord himself exhorts the Jews to do what the Bishop recommends to Christians, *viz.* to search not *Parts* of Scripture but the *Whole* (g) for Prophecies concerning him. And himself explained to the Disciples of Emmaus the (h) *whole Chain* of them from Adam to himself.

The

(g) John V. 39.
44. 45.

(h) Luke xxiv. 27. See also

The Examiner affirms, that the Evangelists *Notions*“ of Prophecy considered as a Proof of the Gospel was not drawn from any Scheme of it deduced from Adam and the antediluvian World; nor do they refer us for the Evidences of our Faith to I know not what Prophecies of Enoch or Noah, but to Moses and the Prophets.”(i) But surely, Sir, since the Evangelists refer us to *Moses*, and he gives an Account of the Sentence pronounced on the Serpent, if *this* can be proved to have all the Characters of a Prophecy, as will be shewn, the Evangelists refer us to a Scheme of Prophecy which takes in *Noah* and *Enoch* and *Adam* himself.

The Advantage to Christianity arising from his Lordship's Scheme, has been already shewn to be great, tho' the Dr. cannot discern the *least*. (k) That the Scheme is not *precarious*, (l) will appear from the Sequel. That it is *calculated* rather to *create* Scruples than *cure* them, is a mere Assertion. As to the *obvious* and

(i) p. 18.

(k) p. 23.

(l) p. 24.

and *natural* Solution of the Difficulties insisted on by *Collins*, which the Dr. proposes “*to explaine hereafter in a particular Treatise,*” (m) when it appears, it will have proper Notice taken of it. In the mean Time, Sir, be so good as inform me what it is *most obvious* for us to expect from a Writer who praises the *Dilligence* and *Accuracy* of the learned Mr *Whiston*, when he says, the “*Apostles might possibly be supposed to be mistaken sometimes in such* (n) *Applications*” [of Prophecies] and declares that *Collins* “*has alledged unanswerable Objections to some of them!*” (o)

The Dr. allows that *Collin's* Interpretation of the Text about which he and the Bishop dispute, may be, that the Apostle does “*prefer Prophecy as a surer Argument even to himself than the Voice which he heard in the Mount.*” (oo) Now his Lordship taking *Collins's* Words in *this* allowed Sense says, “*His Exposition is rejected, as far as I see by all Interpre-*
ters

(m) p. 24, 25. (n) p. 95, (o) p. 151. (oo) p. 54.

ters." (p) Hereupon the Dr. exclaims, and produces the following Critics. Mr. *Whiston's* Authority shall be examined when the Dr. thinks proper to produce his Words. Dr. *Whitby* only says, that *Peter's* Testimony of the Voice in the Mount, was not so certain and convincing *to the Jews* as the Record of their own Prophets. (q) St. Austin says, that Prophecy was more *sure*, not more *true* r, : consequently contradicts *Collins* who calls it a *stronger*, that is a *truer* Argument. *Castalio* calls Prophecy "*more Effectual to persuade and draw Men to Christ,*" (s) that is, a better Argument *ad hominem* ; an Argument which fell in with the Prejudices of the Jews. *Grotius* supposes that prophecy had *great* Credit with *Peter* as a *Jew*, but *greater* as a *Christian*, nor does he draw *any* Comparison between *Prophecy* and *Miracles*. (t) Dr. Cradock, if, He be the Author of the Pamphlet Alleged on this Occasion,

(p) p. 3. (q) Exam. p. 31. (r) *ibid.* (s) *ibid.*
(t) p. 32.

on,) does not mention Miracles; much less does he *formally* suppose that Prophecy gave greater Evidence of it's Truth to *Peter*, than he had of the Vision on the Mount. He says, *If there remain any Doubt*, (concerning some particular Point we may reasonably suppose,) *Prophecy is the best Means to make Men sure* (u And if any Interpreter *rejects Collins's* Exposition only as *less probable*, surely the Bishop may Properly suppose him to *reject* it.

His Lordship calls *Collins's* Exposition "*contradictory to the Sense of Mankind*" (w). The Dr here complains that his Lordship has not given "*the least Proof or Example of it* [the sense of Mankind in his Favor] *in any Country whatsoever*." (x) But would it not, Sir, have seemed an idle Parade of proof and Example, that Men of *Common Sense* desire no *stronger* proof than the Testimony of the *Senses* confirmed by *Reason*? This proof *Peter* had of the Vision on the Mount.

The

The Bishop in Order to shew *Collin's* Exposition inconsistent with itself, observes that the Evidence of Prophecy can be no greater than that of Miracles on which it is *ultimately* founded : and to shew Miracles *necessary* to give Credit to Prophecies unfulfilled, produces Examples of God's affording them to *Gideon* and *Moses*. (a) But the Dr. assures us, all this is nothing to the purpose. (b) "*All who maintain the superior Evidence of Prophecy, (says He,) mean it onely of Prophecy actually fulfilled, and carrying with it the Demonstration of its Truth in the Correspondency of the Event with the Prediction:*" (c) and accuses the Bishop of changing the Question.

Mr. Collins's Words are: "*His [Peter's] Argument seems as follows; laying this Foundation, that Prophecy procedes from the Holy Ghost, it is a stronger argument than a Miracle.*" (d) He does not say

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(a) p. 4. 5, 6. (b) p. 38. (c) p. 38, 39.

(d) *Grounds and Reasons*, &c. p. 27.

Prophecy fullfilled, as the Dr. represents him to do: and therefore may *Equally well* be understood to mean Prophecy unfullfilled, but supported by Miracle. And will the Dr. deny that we have the same Evidence of the *Truth* of a Prophecy unfullfilled, yet delivered by a Person of unexceptionable Character, and confirmed by Miracle, as we have of a Prophecy fullfilled? No -- He (*e*) allows it his Lordship here, like our great Philosopher Sir *J. Newton* (who giant-like run from one End of the World to the other) takes such large Steps, that it is difficult for Readers of less Ability than you Sir, to follow him. However the argument when the parallel is supplied, seems plainly this. As the *most express* resemblance between a Declaration of an Event as future, by a Voice *plainly* more than human, and the genuine Prophecy of the Almighty, is not sufficient without the Attestation of a Miracle to prove *demonstratively* such De-

Declaration to be designed by the Almighty as a Prophecy of such Event ; -- So the *most express* Resemblance between a Declaration of an Event as future by a Voice *plainly* more than human, and an Event : is not sufficient without the Attestation of a Miracle to prove *demonstratively* such Declaration to be designed by the Almighty as a Prophecy of such Event, And the reason is plain, *viz.* that there is no *natural, necessary* Connexion between the Things. And in fact we find Prophecies in the Old Testament attested to the Jews by the Miracles of Moses and the *great* Prophets, and the Application of them in the New Testament by the Miracles of Christ and the Evangelists.

Must we not hope then that the Examiner will retract the following Censure?
" The same Sort of Fallacy seems to run thro' all his Discourses, in which he treats Prophecy in a loose and indeterminate Sense, and speaks of it indifferently as carrying the lame Evidence with it whether

it be fullfilled, or not fullfilled."(f) When his Lordship speaks of Prophecy *unfullfilled* as carrying *any* Evidence or Authority, He supposes it confirmed by Miracle, as appears plainly from his Account of the Cases of *Gideon* and *Moses*.

And now Sir, we get the Dr's Conclusion, "*A Prophecy literally fullfilled, is of itself without external Aid, as clear a Proof of its Divinity as any Miracle can be.*"(g) The Question was, Whether Prophecy be a *clearer* Proof than a Miracle: and the Dr determines, that it is *as clear*. Surely Sir, it is not the Bishop who changes the Question now.

When the Dr publishes his Examination of the Bishop's other Discourses, (b) it will be for his Credit to shew, that there is no Contradiction in saying, "*The Completion of it [Prophecy] being the sole Test, by which its Veracity can be determined:*" (i) and yet adding: "*While*
the

(f) p. 39, 40.
(i) p. 40.

(g) p. 41.

(b) See p. 153.

the Event is still in Futurity, the Authority of the Prophet may reasonably be called in question, unless he can shew some present Sign." (k) The Dr labors, Sir, thro' some (l) Pages to shew that not *Miracles* but the Completion of some Prophecy *very soon* after the Prediction, was the *ordinary* Credential of the divine Commission of Jewish Prophets. Now tho' there are *many* Things in these Pages exceptionable, yet as neither the Errors in the Premisses, nor the Conclusion itself affect the present Question, I shall not trouble you with them.

His Lordship very properly asks: "*Is it possible that St. Peter, or any Man in his Wits cou'd make such a Comparison*" (m) [as to prefer the Evidence of the dark Prophecies of the Old Testament, to the immediate Voice of God on the Mount?] The Dr. replies: "*It is not only possible, but even weak to imagine that he cou'd make any other:*" (n) and then

B 3

pom-

(k) p. 41. (l) From 41 to 47. (m) p. 6. (n) p. 47.

pompously engages for many (o) Pages to shew, that the Jewish Doctors in our Savior's and the Apostles Time pretended to have a Voice from Heaven to direct them: that they *only pretended* to have it, and esteemed it *only* an *inferior* kind of Prophecy. Hence the Examiner wou'd deduce two Conclusions, 1. that "*Peter himself* without doubt *had been taught to consider* [this pretended Voice] *as of an Authority much inferior to the original Word of Prophecy.*" (p) 2. That "*he wou'd necessarily prefer the Evidence of Prophecy.*" (q) I answer, 'tis *undoubted* that *Peter*, a poor illiterate Fisherman, wou'd know nothing of the *nice Distinctions* of the *Rabbis* from their Books: and they wou'd carefully preserve them from the People, whose Ideas of the Dignity of their Rulers and Teachers wou'd greatly sink, if they were told that this Voice upon which the *Rabbis plumed* themselves, was the *lowest* Species of Prophecy. The same Principles which made these

(o) From 47 to 53. (p) p. 50. (q) p. 49.

these Doctors *pretend* to this heavenly Communication, wou'd strongly lead them to *heighten* the People's Notion of it. Any *attentive* Reader must have observed, that notwithstanding our Lord's Miracles on Earth, which were sufficient to convince any *unprejudiced* Person of his divine Mission, the (r) *Jews* still demanded (s) *a Sign from Heaven*. So *extravagantly* did they reverence the pretended Voice in question, so persuaded were they, that it would give Testimony to their *great Messiah*. And in Compliance, no doubt, with these Prejudices, the Almighty was pleased to give at *several* (t) *Times* Testimony to our Lord

in

(r) Tho' the *Pharisees* and *Sadducees* only appear to have askt this Sign, yet we must suppose the People to have been persuaded by them that this Sign was to attend the Messiah, or they would not so confidently have askt it. (s) Matt. xvii. 1. Mark viii. ii.

(t) See Matt. iii. 17. and Parallels. John xii. 28. and Matt. xvii. 1. and parallels. So that in Matt. xvi. 4. Mark viii. 12. the word *Generation*, must be restrained to the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* and *Sadducees*. NB. It seems by no means probable, that the People who said, *It thundereth*, John xii 28. thought it an *Accidental Clap*, as the Dr. surmises N. 1. p. 48. They thought it the

in this Manner, as the most *affecting* to Jews. However, I am persuaded that you, Sir, will agree with me, that tho' St. Peter *had* receiv'd those Prejudices from Education, yet as he wrote this E-pistle when he was led into all *necessary* Truth by the Holy Spirit, and must perfectly see thro' the *Pretences* of the Rabbis, and their *ridiculous* Distinctions, the Prejudices wou'd be nothing to the Purpose.

The Dr. tells us: "*The Occasion of his [Peter's] Words oblige us to interpret them as spoken not with any particular Reference to himself, but to the general Body of the Jewish Converts.*" (u) He informs us that *Peter* was writing to guard these Converts against their *false Teachers*: and that "*Prophecy is a properer Argument to repell the Insults of* unbe-

Thunder which was supposed to preceed the *distinct* heavenly Voice, hence called *Bath Kol*, or, *Daughter of* THE Voice, not A Voice: as the Dr. has it. p. 48. Thunder was called the *Voice of the Lord*, as in Pl. xxix or THE Voice emphatically.

(u) p. 54.

unbelieving Scoffers, *than the Report of a Miracle:*" (w) and alledges St. *Austin's* Reason, *viz. Cavillers will ascribe a Miracle, but not a Prophecy actually full-filled, to Magic.* And that a Voice from Heaven wou'd be *most liable* to this Cavil! That St. *Peter* in this Epistle guards the Converts against *false Teachers*, and that they were *Scoffers* at the Belief of *Christ's coming again in Glory.* I readily allow, Had they not been *profest* Christians, they wou'd not have been *Teachers.* And had they been *Scoffers* at the *whole* Gospel, Prophecy wou'd have been so far from deserving the Character of the *most sure* or *proper* kind of Argument, that it wou'd have been the *most improper.* They who *scoffed* at the *whole* Gospel, must scoff at St. *Peter's* Relation of a Miracle, if it is true. But then Persons who cou'd suppose *Peter*, a Man so justly famous for his Miracles, to lie when he asserted one on his own *Knowledge*; or that God wou'd permit:

permit *Devils* to form a Sound like that
 of God from Heaven, to deceive Men in
this Case : or that Devils would *willingly*
 promote such a Religion as Christ's, must
 be Creatures of too *hardened* Hearts, and
Sceptical Heads to gain Conviction from
any Prophecy, how *litterally* soever full-
 filled. What Objections wou'd they not
 raise to shew that what was called a Pro-
 phesy, was never *intended* as such?
 Wou'd they not say, Sir, that it was a
 mere *allegoric Table*? Or if they were
 forc't to confess, that a Prophecy was in-
 tended, wou'd they not maintain that it
 was a *slight* Conjecture of *mere Man*?
 Wou'd they not find out some *small* Ap-
 pearance of a Want of *Correspondency*
 between the Prediction and Event?
 Wou'd they not fancy that they traced
 out some *Ambiguity* in the Expression?
 Or if they were forc't to confess it *litte-
 rally* fullfilled, might they not with as
much Plausibility ascribe it to the Fore-
 knowledge or Interposition of a *Devil*,
 that

that is, to *Magic*, as they cou'd ascribe the Miracle on the Mount? Surely.

Besides, tis clear that St *Peter* does not propose to the Jewish Converts to *convince* these *false Teachers*, but to *secure themselves*: not against Doubts of the *whole* Gospel; for had the Seducees attacked Christianity in general, they wou'd have been *at once* rejected: but against the Doubts of *some particular* Doctrine, which these Teachers represented as *no part* of the Gospel.

St. *Peter* had been celebrated as the Apostle of the Circumcision. He had wrought such great Miracles at *Jerusalem* on the Feast of *Pentecost*, and at other Times and Places in the *Face* of the Jewish Nation, that *few* of the Converts to whom He wrote, can be supposed not to have seen *some* of them: and those who had not, must have seen the Miracles of *some* Apostle or Evangelist, who ascribed *great Honor* to Peter. So that if these People wou'd not trust him affirming a Miracle

on

on his own Knowledge, they would regard nothing that he recommended. "*Among these [Evangelists] the Argument drawn from Prophecy, (says the Dr.) appears to have been applied to them as the most Effectual and Convincing to the Jews.*" (x) I have shewn, Sir, that this Argument was necessary for Jews after Miracles, but would be ineffectually applied without them: so that it can never reasonably be exalted as Superior to that deduced from Miracles. Indeed Prophecy and Miracles, as they are distinguished from Prophecy, were inseparably connected in the Jewish Religion. As they are distinguished, Sir, I say, For properly speaking we may call Prophecy a Species of Miracles. Why then are we assured, that St. Matthew will tell us on the part of the Evangelists that it was the more sure Word of Prophecy, by the Evidence of which he had shewn in his Gospel, how the Mission of Jews, &c were precisely and circumstantially foretold by the Prophets

(x) p. 17.

phets? (y) Why is St. *Paul* introduced applying Prophecies to Christ? (z) But *above all*, why is St. *Peter* brought in? (a) The *only two* Chapters to which the Dr. refers us as Proofs of St. *Peter's* insisting chiefly on Prophecy, afford *remarkable* Instances of the Efficacy, the *Necessity* of Miracles to give Force to Applications of Prophecy. In the one (b) we are told that the People *in general* paid the *greatest* Regard to the Apostles speaking miraculously at *Pentecost*. Whereupon (c) St. Peter took the favourable Opportunity of confirming their Belief by applying Prophecies. Yet in the (d) *midst* of his Harangue, He urges our Lord's Miracles, as *necessary* to support his Applications. In the other (e) Chapter we find that *all* the People paid the *greatest* Reverence to his miraculous Cure of the Cripple. And immediately follows (f) an Account of the Apostle's urging the Force of the

C Mira-

(y) p. 63. (z) p. 64. (a) *ibid.* (b) Acts, ii. 6, 7
8, &c. (c) v. 14. (d) v. 22. (e) Acts, iii. 11. (f) v. 12

Miracle to prove Christ's Mission, and that He *at last* (g) applied Prophecies.

"It is no Offence surely either to Reason or Religion, (says the Dr.) to imagine that this wonderful Apparition and heavenly Voice might be accompanied with such Circumstances as would naturally leave some Doubt and Perplexity on the Mind concerning the precise Manner and Nature of the whole Transaction." (b) Tha tis, We may safely suppose the Apostle to doubt whether this Vision was the Effect of a *natural* Commotion in the Air, of the *Art* of Men, of *Fancy*, of a *Devil*, or of *God*. Now all that is alleged to Support the reasonableness of this *Scepticism*, is that St. *Peter* was so (i) attentive to the Things which he *heard* and *saw*, that he minded nothing else, and *knew not what he said*: and so *assured* of the Reality of the Vision, &c. that he was seized with a *religious* (k) Fear, and threw himself

(g) Acts, iii. v. 21. (h) p. 54, 55. (i) Mark, ix. 6. (k) *ibid.* and Mat. xvii. 6.

himself on his Face in a Posture of the *most* devout Worship. You, Sir, who are *impartial*, will allow that it is difficult if not impossible to conceive any Circumstances which cou'd more *fully* prove St. Peter's *Assurance* and the *Truth* of the Vision, than these which the Dr. has chose to an *opposite* Purpose. But even had St. *Peter* exprest *some* Doubt of the Reality of the Vision on the Mount, when he was there; since when guided by the *Holy Ghost*, and having *thoroughly* considered the Thing in it's own Nature more credible, he expressly declares in his inspired Writings, that the Vision was true, and opposes it to (l) *cunningly devised Fables*; must we have concluded him still in *Doubt*?

However the Dr. apprehends, that St. *Peter* might think Prophecy "*a firmer Argument, and to carry a more permanent Conviction,*" (m) because of it's "*always lying open to the cool and deliberate Examination*"

C 2

(l) II. Pet. i. 16. (m) p. 56.

mination of Reason." (n) Do not Miracles then, and *particularly* that on the Mount, lie thus open? In the next Place the Dr. observes, that St. Peter denied his Master *after* this Vision. (o) And will he say that the Denial was occasioned by any *Doubts* of the *Reality* of the Vision, and not by his being left to the *Infirmity* of human Nature, which made him attend more to the *present* Danger, than the *Evidence* of Christ's Divinity, his own Duty, &c.

We are assured that "*the whole Question [is] determined against him [the Bishop] by Christ himself---clearly intimating (p) that the Word of Prophecy, as delivered in the Old Testament carried with it a firmer Proof of the Truth of his Gospel to the Jews, than even the greatest of all his Miracles.*" (q) Every Man who can read the Chapter, may *easily* see that the *plain* Scope of this latter part of the Parable is to shew, *not* that one kind of

Evi-

(n) p. 55.

(o) p. 56.

(p) Luke xvi. 31.

(q) p. 57, 58.

Evidence is better than another ; *but* that they who will not believe the Evidence of a Religion which is *sufficient* to Convince them, if they attended as they ought, will not be indulged in their impertinent Requests of *additional* Evidence, which the same Temper of Mind wou'd make them disregard. His Lordship justly observes, that St. Peter represents Prophecy only as "*a Light shining in a dark Place ; --- the glimmering Light of a Candle seen at a distance in a dark Night :*" and eloquently Remarques how inconsistent this Character is with that of a *marvellous Light* or Evidence of the Gospel which was to *Illumine* the Gentile World. (r) In order to Evade this *unanswerable* Objection to Collin's Exposition, the Dr. tells us that the *marvellous Light* is not to be understood of the Evidence of the Gospel which Converts Persons, but "*necessarily signifies the Perfection of that State [the Gospel's] enlightened with all that Knowledge, and enriched with all the*
Graces,

(r) P. 7.

Graces, which are the genuine Fruits of a perfect Faith in Christ." (j) From which State the Persons address'd by St. Peter were, as he tells us, *far removed*: and that therefore he gives them the Candle of Prophecy "*to lead them thro' the Obscurity of their Doubts into clear Day-light.*" (t) And must we, Sir, believe the Dr. Serious when he assures us that the Evidence of the Gospel, the *Splendor of the Sun of Righteousness*, which more powerful than the *natural Sun*, flew from one End of the World to the other *with Healing in it's Wings*, was not a *marvellous Light*? Does he seriously maintain, that the *glimmering Candle of Prophecy* was to conduct the Converts thro' many *dark and dangerous Passages* and tedious *Progresses* before the *marvellous Light* offered itself? How must we account for the Evangelist's Mistake, who represents *Zacharias* as *filled (u)* with the Holy Ghost, when he sung. "*The Day-spring from on High HATH visited us:*

to

(j) p. 61. (t) p. 61, 62. (u) Luke i. 67.

to give Light [the Light of the Day] to them that sit in Darkneſs, and in the Shadow of Death, and to guide our Feet INTO the Way of Peace." In ſhort whoever caſts a tranſient Eye on the Goſpel will perceive, that the *marvellous Light* of the Underſtanding, the Evidence of Miracles, which was offered to *all* by the Evangeliſts, is properly repreſented by that *Light from Heaven above the Brightneſs of the Sun*, which ſhone on Paul.

The Dr. however aſks, "*Is not a Light which ſhines in a dark Place the greateſt Comfort and beſt Guidance which a Man can poſſibly have in a State of Darkneſs?*" (w) I anſwer Yes: but I have ſhewn, that *ſuch* was not the State of Perſons called by the Evangeliſts to become Chriſtians.

His Lordſhip admirably obſerves, that St. Peter "*manifeſtly ſpeaks of it* [Prophesy] *as a Light to be attended to only*
until

until a better comes.--Had he been considering it as the best Support of the Christian Faith,---in that Sense it ought ever to be attended to." (x) The Dr. tells us, all this is nothing to the Purpose. (y) Yet I take it, Sir, to ground this plain Argument. Prophecy when fulfilled *always* deserves the same Regard---St. Peter expressly says, that the *Time will* come when the Prophecy meant in the Text, will *not deserve* the same Regard:---therefore Prophecy *fulfilled*, cannot be meant. But Prophecy *unfulfilled* must be *obscure*---therefore not so good a Proof of any thing as Miracles (which are plain,) when they can be applied *properly*:---therefore the Point meant in the Text must be such as Miracles cannot *properly* be applied to prove, and *unfulfilled* Prophecy may. This the Bishop justly observes to be the Case of our *Lord's coming again in Glory*.

Again. The Point which St. Peter takes this Pains to settle, must be *some-where*

(x) p. 9. (y) p. 65.

where in this Epistle mentioned, and mentioned so as to have a *Connexion* with this Text. This will be found true of the *comming of our Lord again in Glory*. Now as there is *no other* Point to which all these Characteristics answer, it follows that this *must* be *the* Point. I shall sketch out the Connection as briefly as may be: and it will appear *strong, uninterrupted and natural*. Immediately (z) after the Text under question, the Apostle forbids the Converts to imagine, that their *private Judgment* cou'd Interpret how Prophecy *would be fulfilled*. This was to prevent their esteeming it *more than a Light* in a *dark Place*. On the other Hand he secures them from thinking *too meanly of unfullfilled Prophecy*, by observing that it was a *Light* from the (a) *Holy Ghost*, tho' now *shining* in a *dark Place*. Here the Apostle is naturally led by mention of the Holy Ghost and the *old Prophets* to observe that as there were

false

(z) v. 20. (a) v. 21.

(*b*) *false Prophets* who opposed the *true*: so it was reasonable to expect that *false Teachers* wou'd oppose themselves to the *true* ones, who *therefore* exhort the Faithful to attend to this Light of the Holy Ghost. And now nothing cou'd be more *natural* or *necessary* than to secure the Converts against these False Teachers by painting them to the End of the Chapter. This necessary Description having cast the Apostle's Exhortation to attend to the Word of Prophecy a *little* out of Sight, he *immediately* (*c*) resumes it: For having briefly exhorted them to attend to the old and new Prophets, he calls the Seducers *Scoffers*, and thus observes what rendered them most dangerous to his Christians, (*d*) then *expressly* declares what was the *great* Error which they shou'd teach, and he had been *all along* guarding against, *viz.* (*e*) That there was no *Evidence* of *Christ's coming again in Glory*. In the Remainder of the Epistle he applies himself to encourage them to

wait

(*b*) ii. 1.

(*c*) iii. 1, 2.

(*d*) v. 3.

(*e*) v. 4.

wait *patiently* the Completion of this *most sure Word* of Prophecy, 'till the *great and glorious Day dawn*, the *Day of Judgment*; and the *Day-Star* or *Morning-Star* of *Joy* expand itself in their Bosoms. Miracles cou'd do *little* or *nothing* towards the Proof of that Day. The most that can reasonably be inferred from that glorious Vision on the Mount, is a *slight Conjecture*, which deserves *no Attention* when compared with the Evidence of Prophecies, *tho' unfullfilled*, on this Subject: *viz.* That as Christ condescended to be gloriously transfigured on Earth, and took some of his Followers as Witnesses of his Splendor, so he might *perhaps* condescend to revisit Earth and his faithful Servants in his Glory. And now, Sir, the whole Scheme of his Lordship's Exposition, being vindicated, very short Reflections shall be employed on the Remainder of the Dr's. Examination of this Part.

The

The Examiner supposes the meaning of the latter Part of this controverted Text, to be, "*till they [Converts] had acquired a full Conviction and stedfast Faith in Truth of the Gospel*" (f) But this Interpretation plainly contradicts the Apostle who thro' the (g) *whole* Epistle treats the Persons addrest, as having already a *stedfast* Faith. And indeed thro' some *few*, as the *false* Teachers inveighed against, might from some particular Circumstances hope to make *Gain* of *Godliness*; You, Sir, would justly Accuse me of gross Ignorance of the History of the Times when St. Peter wrote, if I cou'd suppose any *considerable* Numbers of *profeſt* Christians in one *single* Church; much more if I supposed the *generality* of those to whom St. Peter wrote, to *wear* the *Cloke* of Hypocrisy. Nothing less than a *full Conviction* and *stedfast Faith* in the Gospel cou'd persuade Men to embrace a State of Persecution,

(f) p. 66. (g) Particularly in iii. 1. He only proposes to stir up their *pure* Minds.

secution, under which the *most courageous* groaned. And indeed cou'd we suppose some considerable Number of protest Christians to be not *fully* convinced, they must be Men of very perverse Heads or Hearts or both, as I've observed, and consequently *regardless* both of Miracles and Prophecies : Men who sinned with open Eyes.

Through many (*b*) Pages the Examiner affords us scarce any Thing which *deserves* Reflection. However, Sir, I shall make a transient one or two. The Dr. supposes St. Peter's Epistles to be *stiled catholic or general, as not written-- to inculcate any particular Doctrine.*" (*i*) I persuade myself, Sir, you never before saw this Reason assigned for calling Epistles *catholic*. Is not the *old* Reason, *viz.* that they are not address'd to any *particular* Church, sufficient? Is not this *new* Reason coin'd to serve the Turn and Contradiction to the *very Design* of spiritual

D

ritual

(*b*) From 66 to 77.

(*i*) p. 68.

ritual Guides in writing Epistles to their Flocks, which is *as generally or more so to correct or prevent particular Abuses* as to instruct in and establish *general Truths*. However the Examiner wou'd persuade us, that the Prophecy mentioned in this Text *must* be applied to confirm the Christian Faith in general, *because* the Apostle in other parts of the Epistles speaks of Prophecies as applicable to that Purpose. (k) Is not the Reasoning here *exactly* the same, Sir, as theirs who argue (l) *The Gift of healing mentioned by St. James, must not be confined to the primitive Times, because every Thing spoke of in this Chapter, is to be extended to later Times?* We are told by the Dr. that his Lordship allows, (m) *no Argument* for our Lord's Return in Glory can be deduced from the Vision on the Mount: and yet that he alleges this Vision as *a Proof* of this Point. (n) So that according to the Dr. his Lordship contradicts himself.

(k) p. 74, 75. (l) See Bellarm. de Extrem. Unct.

(m) p. 76, 77. (n) p. 67.

himself. But if we recur to the *great* Prelates own Words we shall find, that when he denies the Evidence of the Vision on the Mount, he *expressly* mentions *Certainty* and *Affurance*: (o) so that he does not *absolutely* exclude a *sight, conjectural* Presumption. *

His Lordship tells us, that of Christ's coming as a *future* Event we can have no

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surer

(b) p. 21.

* His Lordship joined Issue with the, Infidel Collins, on this Point, viz. that supposing the Translation right, and the words to be understood in a strict Comparative, manner We must give that sense which the Bishop defends, to the Text, But they who are well acquainted with the idiom of the Greek Tongues, know that it loves to express a positive or superlative sense by a Comparative, and that Instances enough may be found in the New Testament. So that we need understand no more by the Text than that Prophecy was a sure or very sure Proof of our Lord's coming in Glory: and that the mention of the Vision in the Mount, is only used to shew what different authority St. Peter and the false Teachers ought to have. This has long been my Sense of the Text, Even before I consulted the Critics: and upon Examination I find several of them observing this Sense, and producing nothing against it. Indeed it stands so clear of all Difficulties, that I am not afraid of offending his Lordship by saying thus much,

surer Evidence than Prophecy: supposing that every Man of *Sense* and *Candor* wou'd understand him to mean Prophecy *supported by Miracle*: especially as he had clearly shewn that without Miracle Prophecies unfulfilled are *no* Evidence. But the Dr. will not understand the Bishop, and harrangues: "*Prophecy not fulfilled carries--no Evidence.*" But he seems to mean that Miracles *cannot* give Credit or Evidence to *unfulfilled* Prophecy when he adds: "*Nor is an Event in futurity capable of being ascertained by any*" (p) [Event or Evidence.] In which Assertion he *seems*, Sir, to contradict what he before asserted, *viz.* that a *present Sign* or *other divine Credential* may render the Authority of the Prophet *unquestionable*, even while the Event is in Futurity. (q) But the Dr. *immediately* contradicts himself in *Reality*, if not in *Words*. "*The Article of Christ's coming is an express Doctrine of the Gospel*"

pel, (says he,) taught both by Christ and all his Apostles." (r) So that by changing Prophecy into Doctrine the Dr. hopes to escape the Charge of Contradiction. The Truth is : *This Prophecy like all others unfullfilled and recorded in the Gospel with sufficient Clearness is certain as to the main of it, viz. That Christ will come again in Glory : but like all unfullfilled Prophecies, obscure as to many particular Circumstances.* However the Dr. draws the following Conclusion from this Prophecy considered as a Doctrine: "*The Jewish Converts to whom St. Peter was writing, wou'd not possibly doubt of it, with doubting of the whole---of the Gospel.*" (f) But is he not too hasty, Sir, who concludes, that the Jewish Converts cou'd not need to be reminded that Christ's glorious Return was prophetically described by himself and his Apostles: especially at a Time when many were about to oppose this Belief with all the Force of Fraud, and Subtilty and Ma-

D 3

lice?

(r) p. 77. (f) ibid.

lice? 'Tis natural to conceive that in the Hurry of publick Preaching to Crouds, the Nature of our Lord's glorious coming could not be *clearly* Explained, or *easily* Understood. Besides, our Lord on *set Purpose* for wise and good Reasons spoke *ambiguously* concerning his future Passion, and consequently of *every Thing* which was to succeed it. And after his Resurrection he did not preach *publickly*. And so little had his Audience profitted by Discourses on the *sublime* Subjects, that even St. Peter a (t) small Time before his Passion, spoke of it with Abhorrence, and his Disciples *just* before his Ascension askt him whether u) *he wou'd at that Time restore the Kingdom to Israel: that is, rule as a temporal Prince?* Besides, *oral Tradition*, as the Dr. *largely* Insists in this very Work, is a *most wretched* Preservative. Nay further: there *cou'd* not want Persons who wou'd represent Christ's *second Visit* to commence at his Resurrection, and end at his Ascension.

And

(t) Mat. xvi. 22. (u) Acts i. 6.

And many Errors wou'd be, nay *were w*)
 formed on this Subject. Now tho' per-
 haps the *three first* Gospels were wrote
 before (x) this *second* Epistle of St. Peter,
 yet as *Printing* was not then known, the
 Dispersion of Copies must be *very slow*,
 and as the Jewish Converts were *widely*
 dispers'd, many of them wou'd continue
long without a sight of these holy Books;
 at least without an Opportunity of *pri-*
vately studying them. On all these Ac-
 counts, and perhaps *many more*, it was
 highly proper that St. *Peter* shou'd ob-
 viate the Evil by writing that *well con-*
nect'd Piece which I have sketched out.
 And indeed so *short* a Performance as this
 second Epistle, wrote with so much *Pro-*
priety and *Spirit* and such a *clear* Thread
 of Reasoning, and coming from a Per-
 son of *such Character* as St. *Peter* on so
important a Subject, at so *critical* a
 Time, cou'd not fail of *great* Success.

His

(w) This Work would be swell'd, and the main Questi-
 on neglected by insisting on Proofs of this kind. (x) Dr.
 Cave supposes it wrote not long before Peter's Death.

His Lordship has most properly observed, Sir, that the *more sure* Word of Prophecy recommended by St. Peter "*may and probably does refer to the Prophecies of the New*" [Testament.] Hereupon the Dr. declares, that "*St. Peter plainly limits the Sense of it* [the more sure Word of Prophecy] *to the Prophecies of the Old Testament.*" (y) And yet, Sir, all his Proof of this Assertion depends on St. Peter's mentioning the old Prophets. But this Circumstance is so far from *plainly* limiting the more sure Word of Prophecy to the Old Testament, that it *plainly* carries to the *New*: unless, we wou'd couclude that *because* the old Prophets were inspired by the Holy Ghost, therefore the Apostles were not to be supposed so. The Bishop surely had great Reason to conclude that St. Peter would refer his Readers to the Prophecies of the Apostles concerning our Lord's glorious Return, because they are *much more* explicit than the Prophecies of Old Testa-

Testament on this Subject. The Dr's indisputable Maxim, that when the Writers of the New Testament speak of Scripture or the Prophecies of the Scripture *in general*, their meaning is confined to the Old Testament is grounded on general Observations that either there was *no* Scripture of the New Testament, or the *Subject* under Debate confined the Sense to the Old Testament. But neither of these Grounds cou'd have reasonably prevented our applying St. *Peter's* Meaning in the controverted Text, to Prophecies of the Gospel, even tho' he had said, *the more sure Word of Prophecy in holy Writ*, because it cannot plausibly be maintained, that *none* of the Gospels were publish'd when this Epistle was wrote: and it is certain from St. *Peter's* express Declaration that his Brother Paul's (a) Epistles were in several Hands: whence the Doctrine of Christ's glorious Return might be deduced. But since St. *Peter* does not add *holy Writ*, for what Purpose shall

(a) II. Pet. iii. 16.

shall we suppose, Sir, the Dr's indisputable Maxim to be introduced?

I have shewn a close Connection between the main controverted Text which mentions *the more sure Word of Prophecy*, and this which the Bishop alleges to prove that the Prophecies of the New Testament *may* be understood. However I wou'd observe in Confirmation of this Opinion, that the Critics have taken notice that the Word which we render *Commandment* signifies *Doctrine*; and I add that the *Perplexity* of the present Construction wou'd be happily avoided, if we understood a Preposition to be wanting [agreeable to the Greek Idiom] and thus rendered the whole Verse: THAT YE BE MINDFUL OF THE WORDS FIRST SPOKEN BY THE HOLY PROPHETS, AND OF DOCTRINE OF US APOSTLES concerning THE LORD AND SAVIOR. (b) Thus the whole becomes easy and natural and admirably connected

(b) II. Pet. iii. 2.

ed with *the sure Word of Prophecy* above. Besides, Sir, it is observable that the Title *Savior* is not usually added to LORD except when the Nature of the Subject more particularly demands both. Need I add, Sir, that St. *Jude* (c) records a Prophecy of *Enoch* clearly enough descriptive of our Lord's glorious Advent, and expressly applies it to the Mockers mentioned by St. Peter, and like him advises that Regard be paid to the Words of the Apostles on this Subject.

His Lordship observed, that figurative Prophecies must even *when fulfilled* have some Obscurity arising from their being figurative: consequently cannot be *very distinct* Evidence: and that if their figurative Nature makes them capable of *more* than *one* Sense, their Completion cannot restrain them *to one*. (d) All which amounts to an Assertion that the essential Nature of Things cannot be changed; and therefore must be Truth. Yet the Examiner
says

(c) v. 14, &c. (d) p. 29, 30, 32.

says: "*This is the Description which he [the Bishop] gives us of THE Prophecies of the Old Testament.*" (e) [*i. e.* Prophecies of Old Testament in general] Again he accuses his Lordship of reducing "*it [Prophecy in general] so low as to render it of no Use at all.*" (f) Yet afterwards (g) he allows that the Bishop has been *bitberto* speaking of figurative Prophecies only. Yet this Charge on his Lordship you will think, Sir, very unreasonable, even if confined to the figurative Prophecies. For tho' they are not a *very* distinct kind of Evidence, yet they may be applied even *singly* with *great* Probability, and with still *greater* when laid *together*; and with the *greatest*, if added to *literal* Prophecies. And tho' Prophecies, *not only figurative but literal*, are capable of more than one Sense and Completion; yet if one be far more *exact* and *noble* when fulfilled in the *ultimate* Sense, as those applied to Christ are, this *double* Sense is so far from proving them to have *no* Use,

(e) p. 82. (f) *ibid.* (g) p. 84.

Use, that it proves them to have *greater* than if only capable of *one* Sense: since they hence become the Support of Ages betwixt the Delivery and Completion. Allow me, Sir, to mention an Instance. *Isaiab* prophesied to *Abaz, &c.* that (b) *a Virgin shou'd conceive a Son*, and that before the Child should know to prefer Good to Evil, the King should see his Desire upon his Enemies. Now as Israel paid the greatest Regard to the Prophet, a Promise of this kind cou'd not but *comfort* them, as the Almighty promised Vengeance on their Enemies, tho' they, knew not *when* the Child shou'd be born or conceived. And when the *faithful Witnesses bare Record* (i) of *Isaiab's* approaching the *Virgin Prophetess*, the People's Hopes must become much greater: The Birth of the Child, a *Son*, wou'd give Birth to new Hopes, as their Salvation was now apparently *near at Hand*. And their Deliverance wou'd convince them that the Prophecy was *litterally*

E full-

(b) vii. 14, &c.

(i) viii. 2,

fulfilled. For the Lord *only* said, that she who was a Virgin *when Isaiah spoke* should conceive a Son, &c. Yet this *primary* Completion would be so far from leading the Israelites to conclude that this Prophecy had its *utmost* Completion, that they wou'd be led to the contrary Conclusion. This Son was to be called (k) *Immanuel*; and tho' *Maher-Shalah-bash-baz* (l) might seem to have some Connection in his Name with this, as God was certainly *with the Israelites*, when their Enemies *in making Speed to spoil them, hastened to make themselves a Prey*, yet the People would naturally expect to themselves or Posterity a Deliverer who should in a *nobler and more exact* Manner be called *Immanuel*. And this Hope wou'd continue 'till Jesus Christ shewed himself to be the Completion of that Part of the Prophecy, A VIRGIN SHALL CONCEIVE A SON, in a *litteral yet nobler* Sense than *Isaiab's Son*, and to have an *indisputable* Right to the Title of *Immanuel*.

I gave

(k) vii, 14. (l) viii. 8.

I gave this Instance of *litteral* Prophecies the rather, because his Lordship has sagaciously observed, that they "*were not always the plainest at the Time of their Delivery, nor received by the Jews in their Meaning for the seeming Incredibility of the Thing.*" and adds: "*Common Sense wou'd lead them to understand--A Virgin shall conceive a Son--in a Manner agreeable to Nature and Experience.*" Here the Examiner misrepresents his Lordship as saying not that the People would *misapprehend* the Meaning of the Prophet, but *disbelieve* what they knew to be his Meaning(*m*). He adds, that this Prediction cou'd not be *cleared* by the Event, so that the Credibility of the Event must depend on the Authority of the Witnesses: and the and the Jews wou'd *rather* credit the Prophets than Apostles. (*n*) Good Sir, can you discover what is the *Tendency* of this Remark? Were not the Apostles Witnesses *sufficiently credible* on this Ar-

E 2

ticle;

(*m*) p. 84, 85.(*n*) p. 86, 87.

ticle? Or, when the *true* and *ultimate* Sense was pointed out, was it not more *noble* and *agreeable* to the elevated Strain of their Prophets? Why then are the Prophets and Apostles opposed? Besides, did not *all* who became Christians *actually equal* the Apostles to their old Prophets?—However this Question, the Bishop and this Enquiry are not connected with: since *all* the Bishop needs to support his Observation, is, that the Prediction was *made clearer* to *reasonable* Men than before, by Completion. The Bishop observed that before Completion Jews would *misapprehend* the literal Prediction: and is misrepresented by the Examiner as saying that they *rejected* it. I wou'd willingly pass over, as a *candid Reflector* the following ungrounded Censure of the Dr. on his Lordship. “ *His Character of Prophecy tends to the same End [as Collins’s] and as far as the Apostles have applied the Evidence of it to the Confirmation of the Gospel, must of*
Con-

Consequence weaken the Credit of the Gospel." The Prophecies of the *Old Testament* as described by his Lordship, are now compared to *Pagan* ones.(o) If *some* of the *Jewish* Prophecies had a *double* Sense, one in which they had a *less exact* and *noble* Completion, another in which they were *more exactly* and *sublimely* fulfilled, yet the former *subservient* to and *consonant* with the later; must we compare them to *Pagan* Oracles, which had *two* but *opposite* Senses; consequently one incapable of being fulfilled! If *some Jewish* Prophecies were not *very* distinct when *alone* considered, even *after* Completion, because of their figurative Character, which excited a Spirit of *inquiry*, made them more capable of *primary* and *secondary* Senses, and consequently *more useful*; must they be compared to *Heathen* Predictions, which were *ambiguous* to *deceive* and never *designedly* promoted a good End?

E 3

If

(o) p. 89.

If — but I refrain from *prostituting* the sacred Pages by such Comparison

Have we not Reason to be surprized, Sir, at Harangues in this Strain, when a *learned* and *honoured* Friend of the Dr. and myself, the Author of the *Divine Legation*, has so *admirably* vindicated the primary and secondary Senses of Prophecy!

What can the *most candid* and *modest* Reflector say, when Prophecies are represented (p) as “*carrying no precise Meaning or distinct Evidence*” in the Bishop’s Account: and that the old World could have *no Use* of Prophecies, because his Lordship says, that they “*were not understood [fully] by those who delivered them:*” (q) and “*others less qualified could have but a confused Notion [in their ultimate Sense] of them:*” (for thus his Lordship must in *Equity* be understood)? --- Let the Dr. reflect, “*Is not a Light which shines in a dark Place*
the

the greatest Comfort and best Guidance which a Man can possibly have in a State of Darkneſs? (r) I have ſhewn that Prophecy was a good Light, conſiſtently with his Lordſhip's Principles, tho' not comparable to our *marvellous* one. And will the Examiner deny the old World, at leaſt the *Land of Judæa* before Chriſt, a State of *Darkneſs* in Compariſon of ours?

The Dr. accuses his Lordſhip of *ridiculing* (ſ) the Denotation of Chriſt, &c. as a *low and inferior End* of Prophecy. But I cannot acquit this Declaration of *injuſtice* to the Biſhop, who only ſays, that "*it gives a low Idea of the Adminiſtration of Providence*" to ſuppoſe God only to propoſe this End in the Scheme of Prophecy. Surely when *two great and good Ends* are propoſed, He who conſiders *but one*, has a *low Idea* of the Adminiſtration, in *compariſon* of him who conſiders *both*.

and

And now, Sir, we advance to the *grand* Question, which employs the Remainder of the Examination. His Lordship represents Man in his State of Innocence, as *capable* of obeying the Law of Nature, and that additional *positive* Command, which the natural Law informed him that it was his *Duty* to Observe. To this Account Dr. *Middleton* makes *great* Exception. “*In this historical Narration [of Moses] we do not find (says He,) the least Trace of any natural Law, nor of any Religion which Nature cou’d Teach.*” It was not surely the Business of *any* Historian, much less of an *inspired* Writer to give an Account of *natural* Law or Religion. For this we are left to search the great *Pandects* or *Archives* of Nature itself: or if we are too *lazy*, we may see the Religion of our *innocent* Parents *inimitably* pourtrayed by a (†) Pen of one *inspired* at least by *Urania*.

We

(†) *Paradise Lost*. B. iv. v. 720, &c. V. v. 144, &c.

We are told in the next Place: "*The natural Law would have taught them [Adam and Eve] that the primary End of their Creation, was, to propagate their Species: but from this historical Naration we find, that during their State of Innocence they were utterly Ignorant of this End.*" (u) The natural Law taught them that TO BE AND MAKE HAPPY, were the *great* and *primary* Ends of their Creation. But that Propagation of the Species was a *Duty* they cou'd never know, till they knew it in their *Power*. This they could not know, unless it was either *revealed* to them, or the Species being propagated as a *natural Consequence* of those *Caresses* to which they were excited by *Instinct* of Nature, they might hence form *Suspitions* that themselves were Instruments under Providence. However, it is evident that it must be *long* before *unassisted* Reason cou'd form these *Suspitions* and *Observations* into any *consistent Proof* that they were the Instru-

ments

(u) p. 104.

ments of propagating the Species; and still *longer* before they cou'd consider it as a *Duty*. So that instead of the *natural* Law's directing the first of human Race to multiplying the Species, as a *Duty forthwith*: they might have continued *long* in a State of uninlightened Innocence without knowing this Duty. However we have *no* Reason to think that our first Parents did continue *long* Ignorant of this Duty: which they would learn from God's Blessing (*w*) *probably* more largely explained to them than it was necessary to Record it to us. The Expression, THEY KNEW THAT THEY WERE NAKED, does by no Means prove as the Dr. supposes, that they were Strangers to matrimonial Converse, but the *direct* contrary; to KNOW frequently signifies in Scripture TO REGARD; and so it does in this Place. SHAME was a Child born to *Sin* when young, and a considerable Part of it's Punishment. How he came to seize on our Parents as
his

(*w*) Gen. i. 28.

- his *guilty* Prey, is not a very difficult Matter to account for. *Adam* by an *excessive* Fondness for Eve, heightened no Doubt, if not *intire* y occasioned by matrimonial Converse, had shamefully sinned. When he reflected on his Crime he cou'd not avoid contracting an Aversion to *sensual* Pleasures. Eve found that she too had sinned, tempted by *sensual* Pleasure tho' of a *different* Species: and as she must perceive that she had tempted *Adam* by her Beauty to sin, and that naked Bodies *greatly* contributed to inflame their Appetite, it was natural to resolve to *hide these*, or *cloath themselves*, Our Epic Poet has exprest himself so *proper'y*, so *sumblime'y*, with such *gracious* Allusion to holy Writ on this Subject, that I'm *mechanically* led to transcribe a Line or two which you need not be reminded of.

— — — — Innocence, that (as a Veil)
Had shadowed them from knowing Ill, was gone:
Just Confidence, and native Righteousness
And Honor from about them, naked lest
To guilty Shame: he cover'd, but his Robe
Uncover'd more: (x) — — — —

“ The

“ The natural Law cou’d not teach them that the Fruit of a Tree wou’d not *inquire* Knowledge, or that the Knowledge of Good or Evil would be *Criminal* or *Sinful* :” (y) continues the Examiner. But the natural Law could teach them that the *Almighty* and *All-wise* Author of Nature must know *whether* and *how* a Tree cou’d become the *Occasion* of their knowing

————— *Good lost, and Evil got.*

Bad Fruit of Knowledge, (z) ———

as the same Bard expresses the Matter. “ *Nor was it the Light of Reason, (cries the Dr) which directed them to hide the seeros, &c. It was not the genuine steady Light of Reason, but it’s glimmering Remains, it’s Splendor being diminish’d by Sin, tumultuous Passions of Fear, Shame, &c. tossing and almost extinguishing it’s Gleam. It is evident that one of the Angels commissioned by God to Minister on special Occasions and bearing the Name of that great Being whom he represented, was*
now

now descended in Paradise: and *Adam* and *Eve* who had seen him when he pronounced the Blessing, &c. and knew him to be *Finite*, and heard a *Noise* like *Thunder*, which Moses (agreeably to the Jewish Mode) here calls THE VOICE OF GOD, foolishly yet not without some hasty and *ill-grounded* Reasoning, attempt to hide themselves. Indeed every one of their Children who commits a *wilfull* Sin, repeats this absurd Conduct of his first Parents, nay does what is more flagrant-ly absurd. They hoped to fly from an *Angel*: He hopes to screen himself from the *Almighty*, and *All-knowing*. The Dr. supposes, that since *Adam* when he named the Beasts, must know their Natures, (a) consequently that they were all Dumb, *Eve* *shou'd* have been shocked at hearing the Serpent speak. I allow that *Adam* knew all the Beasts to be Dumb. Yet does it not follow, that *Eve* cou'd know this *either* without *Adam's* Information, or Information in the Manner he

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gained

(a) p 105.

gained his. And it appears not that she had it either Way. It must have required *long* Experience to gain this Knowledge in the natural Way. *Adam* therefore was *inspired* with it: and it seems from the Event *very* plain that God restrained *Adam* from communicating this Knowledge to Eve, in order that she might be fairly exposed to Trial.

Since the Being of the Devil cou'd not be discovered by Reason, nor was revealed, "*How* (inquires the Dr.) *can we imagine that God wou'd expose their Simplicity unarmed and uninstructed to the Assaults of an insidious Temptor so greatly Superior to them, both in Craft and Power?* (b) Surely, Sir, God did not expose the Simplicity of our first Parents *unarmed* and *uninstructed*. He *plainly* informed them of their Duty, and set before them the Consequences of their Transgression. The Devil therefore tho' *naturally* Superior to them in Force and Fraud, was not

ii

in these Circumstances an *Over-match*: and his Conquest cannot be accounted for without a *gro's* Fault on the part of our Parents.

The Dr. *graciously* informs his Lordship, that "*had he read the short History of Oracles by Mr. de Fontenelle,*" he might have found his Opinion that Devils gave out Oracles to Pagans under the form of a *Serpent*, confuted. Can we, Sir, believe the Dr. to apprehend that his Lordship has not *seen* that Book? Were I not unwilling to swell these Reflections to any *great* Size, I cou'd *easily** shew that *Fontenelle* does by no Means prove the *only* Point for which he is here *celebrated*, viz. that the *wisest* and *best* Heathens, and the *Fathers* thought Oracles "*wholly invented and supported by human Craft.*" However, supposing this Point proved, we must *at last* determine the Question on

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* I may take Occasion to do this in a Discourse introductory to my *designed* Edition of *Plutarch's Treatise on the Failure of Oracles*.

the Principles of *Reason* superior to *all Authority*, in his Lordship's Favor. For since the contending Parties agree, that the Men concerned in these Oracles *generally* at least promoted the Cause of *Immorality* and *Impiety*; since undoubtedly the Devil *always* advances this Cause to the *utmost* of his Power; since he has a Power *greatly* Superior to Man's in *guessing* at future Events in general, in *contriving* ambiguous Expressions to save *Appearances* which way soever the Event prove, in discovering *present* Events at *distant* Places, &c. &c. &c. since God permitted him to *infatuate* the Heathen World *most grossly* in many other undisputed Instances;--it NECESSARILY follows that he would interpolate to support Oracles *in general*.

Allow me, Sir, to mention *two or three* Instances of oracular Answers which *cannot* be allowed for without the Interposition of a Devil. Plutarch (c) informs
us,

(c) de Defect. Orac.

us, that a Governor of *Cilicia* who was an Infidel as to Oracles, in order to expose that of *Mopsus*, sent a Person *to sleep* in the Temple with the Question of which he knew nothing, sealed up. Returning he declared, that a Person appeared in his Dream, who only said, BLACK. Hereupon the Governor confest, that his Question was, *whether shall I Sacrifice to you a WHITE or BLACK Bull?* Now to account for this Answer by *mere human Means* we must suppose that the Messenger was *bribed*, and the Seal *opened undiscoverably*. On the contrary we may be assured, that the Governor wou'd send no Person of whose Fidelity he was not *most strongly* convinced: and the Messenger wou'd be *fully* convinced of the *extreme* Danger of attempting a Fraud of this kind. Besides, the Managers of the Oracle wou'd *clearly* perceive the *great* Danger of attempting to corrupt the Integrity of a Man who must be supposed to come *so guarded* against Corruption. In the last Place we may be satisfi-

ed, that this *Infidel* Governor wou'd contrive the Seal so as to make it *improbable* in the *extreme*, that mere human Art wou'd open it *undiscoverably*. Again--*Herodotus* (d) assures us, that *Croesus* in order to try the Delphic Oracle, sent Messengers with a Question sealed up, the *exact* Time when they were to be deliver it being markt. Now shou'd we suppose the Messengers in this Case *bribed*, and the Seal *undiscoverably* broke open, the Oracle was no more inabled to return a consistent Answer. For the Question was *What am I now doing?* And at the Time *Croesus* contrived to do secretly the most absurd Things. Yet was the Answer just. So that a Devil must have flown betwixt Delphi and Sardis. The Emperor *Constantine* in his Letter to the Eastern Nation, (e) calls God to witness, that when Young he heard a Voice not from Man but a Cavern, which ascribed the failure of Oracles to Persons

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(d) L. i. c. 46. (e) Apud Euseb. L. ii. Vit. Constant.

so described as to be understood Christians. Now it will be said, that surely some Christian or Heathen concealed himself in this Cavern. But it cou'd not be a Christian, the Declaration being *likely* to spirit Diocletian to Persecute Christians; it cou'd not be an Heathen, because the Christians were described as JUST MEN. It must then be a *Devil* forced by the *Almighty* to declare that Devils had managed the Heathen Oracles.

However great the Merit of *Fontenelle*, (on which the Dr. insists,) may be on other Accounts: however *honest* his Intentions in this *furious* but not *fatal* Blow to the Devils Interposition in Oracles: how much Honor soever to a Country professing Popery, to let him *quietly* enjoy his Opinions:---certainly 'tis great Honor to a Protestant Bishop to decry an Opinion, which amounts, as I've shewn to a Denial of the Existence of A DEVIL.

The Dr. observes: "*If it [Moses's Account of the Fall] is to be received as a literal or historical Narration of*
Thing."

Things transacted in the Manner in which they are described, then the Discourse of a Serpent tempting and beguiling our first Parents, must needs appear shocking to every Man: or if-- the Devil under the borrowed Form was the real Tempter, this is still more shocking, as being not only void of all Support from the Text, but contradictory to the express Sense of it, which ascribes the Success of the Serpent to the natural Subtilty of the Beast." (f) To discover the false Ground of this Observation, 'tis only necessary to note that a History may be *true* according to the *Letter*, tho' some Circumstances be not *added*, which makes it true also in a *further* Sense. This is the Case generally of Histories which relate *signal* Wickedness. Men themselves are described as the *Actors*: and no one disputes the *literal* Truth of the Relations on this *Account*. Yet the *Religionist* knows that these Men *acted* as *Instruments* of the Devil. *Exactly* in the same Manner *Moses* tells us,

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(f) p. 114.

“*the Serpent SAID: or the Words proceeded from its Mouth*: for this is all that is necessary to the *litteral* Truth of the Sentence *either* according to common Apprehension *or* Scripture Language. — According to the *former*, because we scruple not to allow it *litterally true*, that a *Man talks* when asleep, in a Fever, &c. and his Mind has *no* Intention of uttering the Words which proceed from his Mouth. Nay an admired Writer (g) of this Age has shewn beyond all *possibility* of *Confutation*, that separate Spirits frequently form the Discourse uttered on these Occasions. — According to the *latter*, because *Balaam's Ass* is said to (h) *speak*, tho' an Angel form'd the Voice. That the *express* Sense of the Text does not ascribe the Success of the Attempt SOLELY to the natural Subtilty of the Serpent, is plain: because then the Words *must* have been: THE SERPENT WAS SO MUCH MORE SUBTLE THAN ALL THE BEASTS

(g) Author of *Inquiry into the Nature of the human Soul*. (h) Numbers xxii. 28.

BEASTS OF THE FIELD, THAT HE WAS ABLE BY HIS NATURAL POWER TO SAY — Had this been the Sense, we must have allowed it contrary to Reason, &c. as will be more *largely* shewn below. But if we suppose the Serpent so subtle, as to be a proper Instrument of the Devil, because *least likely* to be suspected by Eve of acting *above* its Nature, we suppose what is agreeable enough to the Words of Holy Writ, to Reason, &c.

(i) “ *The literal Execution of it [the Sentence] upon the Serpent being verified to us at this Day by the Nature of the Animal, it shews that it must have been pronounced upon a real Serpent, exclusively of any other Agent, or it cou’d not possibly be just:*” says the Examiner. You immediately perceive, Sir, that the Serpent not having a *Right* to *any* Degree of Happiness, it cou’d not be UNJUST to change its Nature for God’s Glory, tho’ its Happiness had been *diminisht*. Yet
it

it appears not that it *was diminisht*. Let the Dr. then *candidly* retract his Assertion: "*The introduction of the Devil embarrasses the Case still more, as it is more glaringly inconsistent with the Attributes of the Deity.*" Nay, he accuses his Lordship of *allowing all this in Effect*, tho' he *only* said: "*Had the History of Man's Fall PLAINLY introduced an invisible Evil Being — it might have given great Countenance to this Error of two Principles.*" that is, *weak* Men wou'd have concluded from a *plain* Assertion, that the Devil *ruined Mankind*, God's Work, that this Devil was an *independent* Being: whereas the Account as it is now given, prevented this *important* Mistake of weak Men, and led Persons of better Sense to conclude that an *evil yet dependent* Being, used the Serpent as an Instrument, and so harmonize the whole Narration with God's Attributes.

The Dr. *ridicules* his Lordship for pretending to *comfort* Men by calling the
Intro-

Introduction of Evil a *most abstruse* Subject (*k*). But the Bishop's Design is to make Men *humble* — a *great* 2nd *necessary* Task. Since Deists must acknowledge the Origin of Evil a Subject, even on their *own* Principles, *very abstruse*; it follows, that they shou'd form *no* Objections against Holy Writ, or *any particular* Interpretation of it, merely because the Introduction of Evil is represented in a Manner *likely* to be attended with the *fewest* and *least* bad Consequences, as in the Bishop's Scheme.

The Dr. observes, that a History of the Fall of the Angels, *wou'd have prevented* these Errors about an independent evil Principle. You will answer, Sir, that this is not *certain*: since Experience shews that the *plainest* Revelations cannot secure *weak* and *willful* Men. However, *we* are certain, who allow the Authority of Moses, that for Reasons wise tho' unknown to us, God saw it not proper that

that Moses should write such History. And any who *directly* disclaim the Authority of Moses, shall have proper Answers to their Objections.

His Lordship justly remarks: “ ’Tis no unreasonable Thing surely to demand the same Equity IN INTERPRETING THE SENSE of Moses, as you wou’d certainly use towards any other ancient Writer.” This the Dr. represents over and over (1) again, as tho’ the Bishop had put the Examination of the *Truth* of the Account on the same Footing as if it had been told by Sanconiatho, or such an one. But does not his Lordship say: “ Let us consider the History of Moses as we shou’d do the History of any other ancient Historian of like Antiquity. Suppose for Instance. that this account of the Fall had been preserved to us out of Sanconiatho’s Phoenician History?” Yes -- but he afterwards expressly confines the Supposition, as I have shewn, to the Manner of Interpretation. The Examiner having thus chang-

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(1) p 119, 125, 128, 135.

ed the *Question*, harangues thro' many(m) Pages to shew that we could not have *sufficient* Reason from *Sanconiatbo's* Pretensions to Inspiration, or his Defence of Tradition to believe such an Account as the *Mosaic*, true in a *litteral* Sense : THEREFORE "we should pronounce it at once to be one of those ancient *Apologues*," &c. Now in order to make *all* this to the Purpose of the Bishop's Supposition and the present Question, it must be *modestly* taken for granted, that an Author cannot *deliver* a Thing as *litterally true*, which yet we have no Reason to *believe* so on his Authority. You will observe, Sir, that the *authority* of Dr. T. Burnet n) can have no Force against *clear Reasoning* in Support of his Lordship.

The Dr. represents his Lordship as calling " *the Stile and Nature of the Mosaic Account--historical, but cloathed in Parables and Similitudes, and in some Part meta-*

(m) p. 128, 129, 130. (n) p. 119, 120, 121.

metaphorical."(o) Here, Sir, is an *heavy* Charge of Contradictions: but I affirm his Lordship *always* to consider the Mo-
saic Account of the Fall as in *Reality* a
litteral History: and that the Mention of
Parables, Similitudes, Metaphor, relate to
something else, † as I now apply myself
to shew.

" *Since this Difficulty* [about an inde-
pendent evil Principle] *might in a great*
Measure be avoided (says the Bishop) by
HAVING RECOURSE to the common Usage
of the Eastern Countries, which was to
G 2 *clothe*

(o) p. 123.

† "My Defence of the Bishop on this Head, is ex-
actly agreeable to the *generous* Vindication of him by
my much honoured Friend, the Author of the *Divine*
Legation, tho' I express myself in other Words to pre-
vent Cavils from the Examiner. Mr. Warburton tells us,
that the Bishop "*was so far from making the Story of*
the Fall to be a Fable or Parable, that it was his Intent
to shew the Infidels, it was neither the one nor the other, but
a true Story; and this by proving it was told Allegorically."
(D. L. B. iv. §. 4. p. 90.) i. e. it was true, that a real,
natural Serpent tempted Eve. This was a *litteral, pri-*
mary Sense. It was true also, that a *spiritual* Being,
for his Cunning, &c. justly called the Serpent, used the
natural Serpent as an Instrument. This was a *seconda-*
ry Sense. So that a true Fact was told *Allegorically*, or
so as to be capable of *two not contradictory* Senses."

clothe History in Parables and Similitudes; it seems not improbable that for this Reason the History of the Fall was put into THE [not THIS] Dress in which we now find it." (p) The Ambiguity of the Expression HAVING RECOURSE, misled the Dr. if he was misled. Are we then, Sir, to understand, that MOSES had Recourse to the Eastern Custom, and clothed the History of the Fall in Parables and Similitudes: Or, that the WEAK JEWS, who wou'd have been more pressed by the Difficulty of the independent evil Principle, if the Devil had been mentioned plainly as the Ruiner of Mankind, wou'd in a great Measure avoid it by naturally HAVING RECOURSE to the Eastern Custom of clothing History in Parables, &c. when they read, "*the History of the Fall --- put into THE Dress*" it now bears; which tho' far from being intended as a moral Fable, would be regarded as such by them, and consequently become harmless? The former Sense is

is inconsistent with *Reason Scripture*, and his Lordship's *Declarations*: the latter agreeable to them *all*. Nor is the Ambiguity of the Expression any *Reproach* to his Lordship. No Book, I believe, is without such. Ingenuity and *ordinary* Apprehension lead one to the *right* Sense. His Lordship's mention of *Metaphor* is allowed by the Dr. himself (q) not to relate to the *History of the Fall*, but to something posterior, viz. *the Language of a Prophecy*, which the Bishop properly observes to have a *primary* and *secondary* Sense, or to be *in Part metaphorical*, that is, *ultimately* to refer to the Devil, who, and not his Instrument the Serpent, was the *proper* Object of *Punishment*.

The Dr. represents the Bishop as saying that *Adam* and *Eve* had some Reason to suspect the Devil to be the *real* Deceiver. And surely they had *very great*. For as the Bishop admirably observes, *Adam* cou'd not be *so* weak as to imagine it *all*

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the Advantage which he and his Children were to enjoy over the Enemy, who was sentenced as the *prime* Transgressor, that *now and then* they should *knock a Snake on the head*, at the *expence* however of having their *own heels* bruised. Besides, God's Declaration that he would *put enmity* between the *Serpent* and *Woman*, and their Seed, plainly implied that there was *originally* none. All this being confirmed by the Observation of *Adam* and *Eve* on the *Serpent* before the Fall, and what deserves *much* to be observed, *Adam's* Knowledge of its *Nature* when he gave it a *Name*, wou'd convince them that the *Serpent* was *only* the *Instrument* of an evil Spirit.

Thro' *many* (r) Pages the Dr. attempts to explain the Mosaic Account as a *moral Fable*: and in order to discredit the *literal* Sense insinuates, that "*no Geography could ever mark out [the Place of Paradise] upon the Face of this Globe.*" What Wonder

Wonder, that Geography, a Science of modern Date, shou'd not distinguish a Place whose Marks were swept away by the *Deluge*!

— — — Then, shall this Mount
Of Paradise by might of Waves be mov'd
Out of his Place, push'd by the horned Flood,
&c. (*s*) says our heroic Bard, and deduces a fine Moral---to teach thee that God attributes to place no Sanctity, &c. However one part of the Dr's moral Fables, shews the whole to be---what, Sir, shall a modest and candid Reflector call it?
"The Author meant without doubt (says he,) to Account also after the Eastern Fashion for the abject State of the Serpentine Race, now creeping upon it's Belly, licking the Dust, and in perpetual Hostility with Man whose Heel it sometimes bites, while Man more frequently finds Means to bruise his Head." This he calls
"a fanciful Solution of the Cause and Origin of the present odious Nature of that Beast." 'Tis indeed fanciful, but such as the Sages of Antiquity wou'd never
fancy

fancy for themselves or others. According to the Dr. the Design of the Mosaic Account of the Fall must be, to represent how Man tempted by his *own* Lusts *alone*, deserted his true Happiness. But---lo! in the *midst*, nay, from the *very beginning* of this great Design the *Fabler* deviates into a *poor, trifling, contemptible* Scheme, of accounting for the Nature of one of the *lowest* Creatures. And this he works up with his *grand* Design so that 'tis impossible to *separate* them. He begins with telling us that the Serpent *tempted Eve*,---but means no such Thing. He means that she and her Husband *tempted themselves*. He tells us what Discourse past *between* them; but means not that they had any *Connexion* or *Correspondence*. He informs us *gravely* how the Serpent was sentenced, but supposes not *any such* Thing---Indeed how shou'd he. For he does not believe the Serpent, even as an *Instrument*, to have done *any* harm. Yet he supposes the *Sentence* to be *executed*---For it is this *Execution* which

which he intends to Account for. The Origin of the Enmity between Man and Serpent he wou'd gladly *explain*: but supposes that they have *no Connection* but in his *writing*. In short, he *confounds* the Notion of *right* and *wrong* by supposing the Deity to *punish* where there is no *Guilt*— in order --- to *establiſh* the Notion of *Right* and *Wrong* in his *moral Fable*. This is the Sage of Antiquity! *ΟΥΤΟC ΕΚΕΙΝΟC*! However the Dr. at last *remits* a Concession which the Bishop *never made*, and urges his Lordship with the Authority of the Prelate—*without a Name*.

His Lordship, proposes (*t*) as *probable* the Opinion, that Sacrifice of Animals was by God *instituted* just after the Fall. All that the Dr. opposes, is, that "*the Text gives not the least hint of any such Origin*:" (*u*) and that Dr. *Spencer* thinks otherwile than the Bishop. To which it is a sufficient Reply, that many Opinions

ons may be *highly probable*, tho' not *expressed* in Scripture; and that no Man's *Authority* should be opposed to *Reason*. The *slaying* an Animal and *consuming* it by Fire, with *religious* Rites, must be allowed a *most proper* Means of keeping up the Sense of Man's *Fall*, and the *necessity* of a *Redeemer* -- Therefore, was an Institution *worthy* God, and may very properly be supposed to be instituted when the *first Prophecy* of a Redeemer was delivered. The Opinion is rendered still *more* probable, when 'tis considered, that otherwise *Abel* must have such *gross* Notions of Religion as to suppose that *consuming* God's Creatures by fire would be a *more acceptable* Sacrifice of Praise to God, than the *Overflowings* of a *thankful heart*. From this Opinion established as *highly* probable, his Lordship *justly* infers with *equal* Probability, that *Abel's* bloody Sacrifice was preferred to *Cain's* unbloody one; the former being instituted by God, as a *Memorial* of *Propitiation* to be made, the other not. Surely then his Lordship's
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and Dr. *Lightfoot's* Deduction that the *Primitive* Sacrifice was a *Type* of the *great bloody one*, is not a Supposal (w) of whatever Premises they want, a taking every Thing as granted, &c. God's Expostulation with *Cain*, (if rightly translated, which the Dr. *denies* not) *plainly* refers to the Reason why his Sacrifice was not accepted: and this has been shewn to be *probably*, his Neglect of an *instituted* Sacrifice. The Examiner talks, however at last, of his Lordship's Suppositions as (x) *controverted* and *rejected* by the *ablest* Writers. Is it not surprizing, Sir, that he did not say *confuted*? Let their Reasons be produced, and they shall be shewn *inconclusive*. His Lordship's "*curious Refnements* (says the Dr.) *are proposed as fundamental Principles of our Faith.*" (y) Yet just above his Lordship is cited saying, with his *usual* Modesty, "*Sacrifice may PERHAPS be found to be one Kind of Prophecy.*" And his other *happy* Illustrations are never recommend-
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(w) p. 142. (x) p. 146. (y) p. 148.

ed to a *greater* Degree of Credit than they claim by their *Connection* with Holy Writ, the *Rule* of our *Faith*. What remains of the Examination is only Repetition intermixed with other Figures of Rhetoric.

All that is *new* and *deserves Notice* in the *curfory Animadversions* as having the *Appearance* of Argument, &c. follows.

To the Bishop's Question, "*Whoever SERIOUSLY [that is, with Intention to be understood as giving a literal History] introduced the Beasts thus reasoning?*" The *Animadverter* answers, "*There never was a Writer of FABLES --- but he introduced them in this Manner.*" (z) This is *exactly* as tho' a Person should ask, Sir, on a *certain* Subject: *Did ever Christian Divine write thus?* And another should reply, *Every Infidel does.*

His Lordship had produced (a) *Jo-
than's* Apologue, to shew by a Compari-
son

(z) p. 164. (a) Judges ix. 8. &c.

son of *Stile*, &c. the Difference between *moral Fables* in Old Testament and the *Mosaic* Account of the Fall; and particularly, that the *highest* Subject to which they are applied, is *civil Government*. Whence it seem'd a proper Conclusion, that this Account of the Fall, as it treats of the *sublimest* Points of Theology, cou'd not be a Fable. But the Dr. assures us, "*there is nothing in the Stile or Matter of the one but what will prove it to be equally fabulous or equally historical with the other.*" (b) and observes, that the Serpent reasons "*on sublime Points of Theology*" the Trees on Points of *civil Government*. Consequently, according to the Dr. *Theology* and *Policy* are the same. Again--- "*Trees were known as certainly to speak and give Oracles to the Ancients, as Serpents.*" And must we conclude, Sir, that becau'se *Pagans* believed *Spirits* to speak in *Trees* and *Serpents*, therefore *Moses* cou'd not mean that a *Spirit* spoke in the first *Serpent*? The contrary Conclusion

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(b) p. 166.

clusion, *if either*, is to be made. When *Woolston* attacked the Miracles of our Lord, &c. he attempted to shew that they should be *allegorized*, like the Parables of the New Testament. Every Man of Sense thought it sufficient Confutation of this Scheme, to shew that the Historian delivered the former *in his own Person*, as *Facts connected* with the other *allowed Facts* of the History, and told in the *same Manner*: whereas the latter were put into the *Mouth* of a *Teacher*, and the *Doctrine* thence intended to be inferred, was either *express* or *left so plain* that it cou'd not be mistaken by Men of Sense. In short the one were as *plainly declared* to be Parables and the other not, by Circumstances, as cou'd be expected on *Supposal* that they were thus *designed*. All this is *perfectly* applicable to the *Mosaic Account of the Fall* compared with *Jotham's Parable* or any other in the Old Testament

“ *Some Writers have imagined* (says the Animadverter, *the Story of the Fall to be*

be of the fabulous kind; because the Curse denounced against the Serpent -- would otherwise seem impertinent, since it inflicted nothing, but what flowed from the original Nature and Formation of the Animal." (c) This, we are told, the Bishop treats with great Contempt, and I add, justly. His Lordship supposes on no less Authority than that of Holy Writ, that the Nature of the Serpent was changed at the Fall. "*How, I neither know* (adds he) *nor shall inquire."* (d) As tho' the *Fact* and *Mauner* were the *same Thing*, the Dr, makes a change, and tells us: "*To inquire would be -- fruitless; whereas to suppose* IT [the *Fact*, for this is all the Bishop supposes] *is easy."* (e)

The Bishop's "*hypothetical Way* (we are told) *wou'd confound all Reasoning-- when it was his Business to prove, that the Devil was the real Tempter of Eve, he declares it impossible and contrary to Nature, that a mere Serpent should talk*

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and

and reason; yet when the Nature of the same Serpent is alleged in Contradiction to his Scheme; then the Nature is nothing, as being often actually varied at the Pleasure of its Author." (f) Yet so far are these Assertions from *confounding all Reasoning*, that they are built on its great *Maxims*.

When his Lordship declares it *impossible, contrary to Nature*, for the first Serpent to *talk and reason*, he grounds his Assertion on Holy Writ (g) declaring the *Serpent more subtle than all the Beasts of the Field*; consequently *implying* it to be *one*: therefore incapable of *Talk and Reason*, unless God cou'd inspire *Moses* to utter a *Lie to deceive Men*: that is, unless God was *not good*. Nature in this Case cou'd not be changed without *destroying the Notion of God*. On the contrary, Changes in Nature's Laws *conducive to God's Glory* may be made, or God is not *Omnipotent*: Now
God's

(f) p. 171, 172. (g) Gen. iii. 1.

God's *Glory* and *Veracity* conjointly are concerned in the Charge of the Serpent's State from *erect* to *prone*, &c. because God's Word *expressly* (*b*), declares this Change to have been made in *Execution* of the Almighty's *Sentences*: consequently a denial of such Change destroys the Notion of God. Thus we have the *same* Evidence of his Lordship's Assertions as of the Being of a God; and his Adversaries terminate in a Denial of Miracles, and on the *very* Principles of the two latest *avowed* Opposers of them, *viz. Hume and Morgan*:--the former of whom *sagaciously* concludes, *There never was a Miracle, because we see none now*: the latter, *God's Laws are immutable, because he is so*.

The Animadverter represents the Bishop as *believing*, that Serpents before the Fall spoke: because "*if nothing more be meant by this series of Questions [of the Bishop] than that God, who struck one Man*

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(*b*) Gen. iii. 14.

Zacharias] *dumb, might have struck all Men dumb---it is wholly trifling and of no Service to his avowed Argument.*" (i) His Lordship's Adversaries had denied a Change of Position, &c, in the Serpent, because he cou'd not shew the (k) *Manner*. The Example therefore of *Zacharias* was used to shew that might strike *all* Men dumb, and yet *no Body* know the *Manner*. The genuine Inference is, not that God *did* strike all Serpents dumb, but that Man's Ignorance of the *Manner* of a Change in the Serpent, is no good Objection to it's *Reality*. This is not trifling, but very Pertinent.

The Bishop observes, that our Lord declares the Devil to be the *Temptor in the Gospel State*: that he could not do this without *implicitly* declaring who was the *original* Temptor: because he must be *the same*. (l)---Now, Sir, does the Dr. deny that Christ declares the Devil the Temptor in the Gospel State?
No

(i) P. 174, 175. (k) P. 170, 171. (l) P. 20, 21.

No---Does he endeavor to shew the Temptor of *Christians* not to be the *original* Temptor of Eve? No---He only represents the Bishop as supposing Christ to DISCUSS, that is, *thoroughly explaine* the Question of the origin of Evil. Whereas his Lordship says expressly, that Christ "*does not enter into the curious Questions relating to the origin of Evil:*" (m) but having it BEFORE (n) him, *incidentally, consequentially* declared that Satan tempted Eve. What then, Sir, must we think of the Animadverter giving it as a Confirmation of the Bishop's Argument, that our Lord does not tell us "*how that Wicked one was himself introduced, and how he became endued with a Nature and Power utterly opposite to hostile and the divine Nature?*" (o)

"From this Penalty [Eve's Subjection to Adam] Man's Superiority is left to be collected by us" says the Bishop (p) Man had a clear Superiority previous to the Fall by
Pri-

(m) p. 22. (n) *ibid.* (p) p. 181, 182. (p) p. 420.

Priority of Creation, and the Woman's *Formation* out of *his Rib*: says the Dr. (q) *Priority of Creation* conveys no more a *fitness* to govern than *Priority of Birth*: whence every older Person should govern the younger: nay the Beasts as *first created* should govern Man. *Adam* gave not a Rib, but had it *taken* by One who had the same *Right* to form *Eve* of it as *Adam* of the *Dust*. However the Words of Holy Writ are *express* (r) that the *actual Right* to govern was given to the Man *after* the Fall. And indeed the Dr. is too wise to risque his *Right* to govern his *Lady* on such Chimæras as *she* would have Sense enough *easily* to confute. He settles it then on the good old *Hobbeian* Foundation (s): "*That Superiority of Force and bodily Strength, which distinguishes the Male from the Female, and necessarily conveys a Superiority of Power* [he must mean *RIGHTFUL* Power, or 'tis *gross* Tautology] *to the stronger over the weaker.*" It seems then

no

(q) p. 187.

(r) Gen. iii. 16

(s) p. 188.

no Man has a Right to *rule* his Wife, but who can *thrash* her. To advance this Scheme are we told, that his Lordship's Account *expressly* deduced from Scripture is "*a groundless Conceit.*" (t) The Animadverter asks his Lordship, How the Devil could be ignorant of the *Character* of *Jesus* when he tempted him? 'Tis sufficient to answer, that *either* the Devil must be thus ignorant, or knowing him *all-wise* and *all-holy*, attempt to draw him to Sin. And surely the *former* Case is *much more* probable. It does not appear that Christ had yet wrought *any* Miracle to try him: especially as he knew that *many* false Christs rose about these Times. However the Dr. observes, that it happens *unluckily* for "*the Bishop that the Evangelists confute his Opinion, by expressly affirming, that the Devils acknowledged Jesus to be the Christ.*" (u) But is it not *more unlucky* for the Animadverter that *all* these Instances are *inferior* in point of *Time* and therefore not *pertinent*.

The

(t) p. 188.

(u) p. 193, 194.

The only *p'ausib'e* Thing offered in Opposition to the Bishop, is, that there had been *one* Attestation of Christ's Messiahship by a Voice from Heaven (*w*) but since 'tis *possib'e* that the Devil might be at too great a Distance to hear it, and this Temptation seems to imply as much, no Objection can hence be raised.

His Lordship justly observes, that the Prophecy of the Woman's Seed bruising the Serpent's Head, will not be ACCOMPLISHED, [ultimately, perfectly fulfilled] 'till the Day of Judgment. Hereupon the Dr. harangues (*x*) "*The Benefit of the Prophecy evaporates. --- Strange Comfort to an Inhabitant of this Wor'd, which cou'd not be FELT or UNDERSTOOD 'til' the Wor'd itself shou'd be no more.*" Is it not in a great Measure FELT, and may be intirely UNDERSTOOD. Is it no Comfort to Mankind to be *certain* amid all their *Temptations* and *Sufferings*, that a Savior is *born*? --- That he has *lived* and *died* for them? --- That he is *risen* and *ascended* to Heaven

(*w*) Mark i. 11.

(*x*) p, 195, 196.

ven?---That he is their *Advocate*? Is it no Comfort that we are (y) *not more* assured of *our own Existence*, then we may be of *eternal inconceivable* Happiness, if we receive Christ's *easy* Yoke and *light* Burthen? Is it no Comfort to be animated by the Examples and Prayers of our Brethren who are gone to receive their Crowns? Is it no *Comfort* that Christ has sent *THE Comforter*? Is it no Comfort--- But why say I more? Does not he who denies us to have comfort because we are militant, deny the Evidence of the Gospel asserted by *any* Argument whatever? He appeals to the Day of Judgment, "*which [alone] can determine the real Character not only of this but of ALL other pretended Prophecies, Inspirations, and Revelations of the Will of God, which now chiefly occupy the Attention, and CONSTITUTE the Religion of all the Nations upon Earth.*" (z) What Prophecies but those

(y) See my Evidence of Christianity, &c. Editⁿ 3^d

(z) p. 197.

those which the Evangelists, &c. *expressly* applied to Christ---what Inspiration but that of the Prophets and Apostles---what Revelation of God's Will but that of the Old and New Testament *chiefly constitute*, or *constitute* the Religion in the reformed Churches? None---Are these then PRETENDED? Are we to neglect Christianity and stick to *natural Religion*? So the Animadverter proposes. (a) He appeals to the last Day. Heaven grant that in that *solemn* Day he who denies us *Comfort now*, may enjoy it, together with you,

S I R,

East-Newton,

Feb. 3^d 1750.

and your most sincere

and humble Servant,

THOMAS COMBER.

(a) p. 198.

The following Note for p. 33. l. 8.

+ "The Dr. might have seen a Paraphrase on this Passage, beyond Comparison the best, in our illustrious Friend, the Author of the *Divine Legation*, as follows: *If they will not hear MOSES and the Prophets, whose Authority they acknowledge, and whose Missions were confirmed by so MANY and WELL-ATTESTED Miracles, neither will they regard a new one of the Resurrection of a dead Man.*" (D. L. B. vi. §. 4 p. 515.)